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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Grants for River Restoration and Climate Preparedness

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Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

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BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today announced \$97,000 in state grant funds for Priority Projects in the Towns of Falmouth, Kingston, and Chester to support the restoration of rivers to their natural state and increase climate preparedness. Benefits of river restoration include increased habitat for fish and wildlife, flood management, landscape development, and an increase in recreational opportunities and access. The grant funds are administered by the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Division of Ecological Restoration (DER).

"Communities around the Commonwealth are on the front lines of climate change and environmental protection, and the Baker-Polito Administration is committed to assisting our municipal partners and stakeholders in the removal of aging dams and restoration of ecosystems and habitats," **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. "The projects receiving funding benefit local, regional, and state economies by creating and sustaining jobs within the construction, engineering, and nursery industries."

Priority Projects are evaluated by DER on their ecological benefit, cost, size, practicality, feasibility, contribution to climate readiness, opportunity for public education and recreation, available program resources, and partner support. They are chosen through a state-wide, competitive process, with selected projects commencing when the DER issues a pre-Request for Responses (RFR). Eligible applicants include municipalities, private property owners, non-profits, and academic institutions. Selected projects are also eligible to receive technical services such as data collection, engineering, design work, and permitting; project management and fundraising assistance from DER staff; and small grants.

"These projects improve fish and wildlife habitat while also protecting public safety and increasing resilience to severe weather," **said Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Ronald Amidon**. "We are particularly excited about the benefits that these projects provide for eastern brook trout and river herring."

The three Priority Project projects receiving grants include:

Coonamessett River Restoration Project, Falmouth

Award: Town of Falmouth, \$70,000 (state grant)

The Town of Falmouth, DER, conservation organizations, and state and federal agencies are working together to restore the Lower Coonamessett River in Falmouth, Massachusetts. The Coonamessett River, one of the largest rivers on Cape Cod, once harbored a significant herring run. This run was significantly degraded through a long history of land use for the purposes of agriculture and the region's early industrial development. In addition, obsolete dams and a deteriorated road-stream crossing impede river herring as they migrate upstream to spawn in Coonamessett Pond. The Coonamessett River Restoration project will result in removal of two unwanted earthen dams, installation of a new fish-friendly and climate-ready

crossing at John Parker Road, as well as restoration of 4600 linear feet of in-stream river habitat and 56 acres of former cranberry bog. These actions will provide improved access for river herring to 158 acres of spawning habitat in Coonamessett Pond, restore natural riparian and wetland habitat, and enhance public access in an important Town-owned conservation area.

Jones River Restoration, Elm Street Dam Removal, Kingston

Award: Jones River Watershed Association, \$15,000 (state grant)

The Jones River Watershed Association (JRWA), the Town of Kingston, MA, The MA Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), the MA Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*), Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and other project partners are working together to plan the removal of the Elm Street Dam at the head of tide on the Jones River. The dam is a municipal structure owned by the Town of Kingston, and JRWA is leading the dam removal project on behalf of the Town and the Project Team. Removal of the Elm Street Dam will restore habitat and passage for target species including: Alewife, blueback herring and rainbow smelt among others. The project also considers additional benefits to all aquatic resources and water uses.

Kinne Brook Restoration and Culvert Replacement, Chester

Award: Trout Unlimited, \$12,000 (state grant)

DER, Trout Unlimited, and other partners are working together to restore Kinne Brook. The goal of the project is to increase stream connectivity and reduce the vulnerability of two undersized culverts in the headwaters of the Kinne Brook watershed. The two culverts have been deemed complete barriers to fish and wildlife; they are also known to fail, overtop, and cause damage to the roadway during storms. Replacing these undersized and failing culverts with larger, safer structures will allow full upstream and downstream movement of aquatic species, including the native eastern brook trout, and reduce the risk of road damage and failure in flood conditions.

“The waterways of our region are a vital natural resource for both the ecological diversity of our communities and their beauty which attracts visitors,” **said State Senator Vinny deMacedo (R-Plymouth)**. “I would like to thank the Baker-Polito Administration for continuing to partner with our communities and local experts to protect and preserve these valuable resources.”

“I’d like to thank Governor Baker, Secretary Beaton, DFG Commissioner Amidon, and DER Director Lambert for their continued commitment to the Coonamessett River Restoration project,” **said State Representative David T. Vieira (R-East Falmouth)**. “As a child, I have fond memories of waking up on spring mornings at my grandparents’ home in Hatchville and hearing the loud calls of Seagulls as if we were at the beach itself. My grandfather and I would hop into his yellow pickup truck and drive down to

the Coonamessett River to watch the herring by the hundreds, perhaps thousands, making their way up the river and through the lower bog dam. Back then we could even fish for them. Over the years, that has changed. This investment will help restore necessary wetland vegetation to improve the health of the river so the herring can return in greater numbers, and also provide safe public access so our children and grandchildren can learn about the river and develop what Aldo Leopold coined as a ‘Land Ethic’. For that which they learn to love, they will work to protect.”

“I grew up playing along the banks of the Coonamessett River and was captivated by the beauty of the river and the wildlife running through it. This grant from DER combined with efforts by the Town, The Coonamessett River Trust, and many other environmental groups ensures that all Falmouth residents will enjoy the Coonamessett river for generations to come,” **said State Representative Dylan Fernandes (D-Falmouth)**.

“Municipal officials representing the smallest, rural communities in western Mass. face mounting costs associated with maintaining critical infrastructure, like roads, bridges and culverts leading to either deferred maintenance or the redirection of funds, which limits other critical programs and services,” **said State Senator Adam G. Hinds (D-Pittsfield)**. “I thank the Division for supporting Chester’s efforts to resize two culverts at Skunk Brook, eliminating public safety hazards while also improving wildlife habitat.”

“I am grateful to the Department of Fish and Game for its investment in this area of the Kinne Brook watershed,” **said Representative Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington)**. “Projects like this culvert replacement help to improve and sustain fish and wildlife habitats for the public’s enjoyment, as well as manage the negative impacts of climate change on our natural environment. It supports our responsibility to be good stewards of our natural areas in the small rural towns of western Massachusetts.”

The mission of the Division of Ecological Restoration is to restore and protect the Commonwealth’s rivers, wetlands and watersheds for the benefit of people and the environment. The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is responsible for promoting the conservation and enjoyment of the Commonwealth’s natural resources. DFG carries out this mission through land protection and wildlife habitat management, management of inland and marine fish and wildlife species, and ecological restoration of fresh water, salt water, and terrestrial habitats. DFG promotes enjoyment of the Massachusetts environment through outdoor skills workshops, fishing festivals and other educational programs, and by enhancing access to the Commonwealth’s rivers, lakes, and coastal waters.

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